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SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, DECEMBER, 1920

NUMBER 12

DECEMBER MEETING: The next regular meeting of the Association will be held on Thursday evening, 9th inst., at eight o'clock sharp, in the Lecture Hall of the California Development Board, mezzanine floor of the Ferry Building.

Dr. Barton W. Evermann, Honorary Member of the Association, will give an illustrated account of "A Recent Trip to the Hawaiian Islands." Visitors will be welcomed.

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DECEMBER FIELD TRIP will be taken on Sunday, December 12th, to Big Lagoon, via Muir Woods; returning via Coyote Creek and the old rifle range to Manzanita; distance, 12 miles. Purchase round trip tickets to Mill Valley, 52c. Take Sausalito Ferry, 8:15 a.m. Bring lunch and canteens. In event of rain falling at this hour, trip will be postponed to 19th.

* * *

PROCEEDINGS OF THE NOVEMBER MEETING: The forty-sixth regular meeting of the Association was held on November 11th, in the Ferry Building, with President D'Evelyn in the chair; Mrs. C. R. Smith, Secretary; twenty-one members and nine guests in attendance.

The Board of Directors convened just prior to the meeting and elected Miss Susan E. Beaman to membership.

Following a brief business session, Dr. G. Dallas Hanna, Curator of Invertebrate Paleontology, California Academy of Sciences, delivered a lecture on the "Birds of the Alaska Seal Islands," copiously illustrated by excellent lantern slides and highly interesting throughout.

Died, November, 1920, Howard M. Leggett, Member of the Association.

* * *

BIRDS OF THE ALASKA FUR-SEAL ISLANDS

The Alaska Fur Seal Islands, otherwise known as the Pribilof Group, are known far and wide as the breeding grounds of fur-seals and the site of the industry which centers around the taking of the pelts for market. If it were not for the overshadowing importance of this industry the islands would be famous nevertheless for the vast rookeries of sea birds which are found there. The towering cliffs of rugged volcanic rock furnish horizontal shelves, and innumerable nooks and crevices which afford admirable nesting places for such birds as fulmars, kittiwakes, murre, auklets and puffins.

The commercial operations with their international importance make the Pribilof Islands exceedingly valuable and their natural history has probably been more intensively studied than that of any other area of equal size in northern North America. Scarcely a year passes without

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some one concerned with biology going there in the interests of the fur-seal herd. These men have often been ornithologists, at least as amateurs and the records have been kept strictly up to date.

Only 45 species and sub-species of birds are found regularly in migration and breeding season, but stragglers have swelled the list to 133. Thus about 66 per cent of the species have appeared there accidentally, a condition probably not known elsewhere in the world. The records are supported by actual specimens in all cases except six. No less than 15 species have been taken on the Pribilof Islands for the first time in North America. They are the type locality for five species and sub-species but only one is believed to be endemic. Wandering birds come from nearly all parts of the northern portion of the northern hemisphere. Europe, Siberia, Kamchatka, Japan, Korea, Manchuria, as well as Canada and Alaska have furnished species for the list. Heligoland in the North Sea is the only other place which may be as cosmopolitan. The two localities furnish a fair commentary upon the erratic wanderings of birds. Even the small amount of collecting on the Pribilofs in 1920 resulted in the capture of two species for the first time. Strangely enough, rare visitors have seldom been taken twice.

Stragglers are not confined to the groups of water birds, as might be suspected, but take in many families of land birds such as thrushes, hawks, owls, sparrows, haw-finches, grosbeaks, crossbills, cuckoos, swallows and swifts. The ducks, geese and shore birds would of course be expected. Those globe wanderers, however, such as the albatrosses, petrels and shearwaters, are represented only by species which would be expected there.

Only 22 species nest on the Islands, but some of these exist in such vast numbers that estimates mean but little. In 1918 the least possible estimate of Pallas' Murre was 10,000,000 pairs nesting on St. George Island alone. This had for a basis, the area of the cliff surface and the number of pairs found in a given unit. When one looks upward from the base of that incomparable precipice through a thousand feet of air-laden murrens flying to and from their ledges, the impression is bewildering.

Enormous numbers of other species live there also, but are less conspicuous. These are the kittiwakes, fulmars, puffins and crested, paroquet and least auklets. The latter has been said to be most abundant species of wild bird on earth. Certainly it is the most abundant species congregated in one small area. While they are found in the smaller cracks and crevices of the cliffs, the great majority resort to the rough boulder beaches and the interstices of the volcanic rocks of which some of the mountains are composed. In these localities they are comparable only to swarms of bees, gnats or Alaskan mosquitoes. The stocky little birds, a trifle larger than an English sparrow, fly to and from the rookeries and circle over them in clouds, in numbers too great for human comprehension. A rough estimate, based upon the areas of the rookeries, came to 25,000,000 pairs. There may be half this number or double it.

Natural enemies are practically absent about the Islands, but, of course, the birds enter largely into the diet of the native population. They catch the least auklets in nets similar to the butterfly net of the entomologist. Other species are shot in considerable numbers. It is known, however, that not over 10,000 individuals are killed annually by the 300 people living there. This number is so insignificant as compared to the total that its effect is imperceptible. No appreciable diminution of any species has been recorded. Modern methods of living and the introduction of the tin can are reducing constantly the number of birds required for food, and where they are so abundant no one shoots for sport. Unless some natural catastrophe befalls the birds up there, the Pribilof Islands should remain indefinitely one of the ornithological paradises of the earth.

G. DALLAS HANNA.

BIRD LAWS HEREABOUTS

The State of California has designated March seventh of each year as Bird and Arbor Day, and has directed its observance in all public schools and educational institutions by suitable instruction as to the economic value of our birds and trees and for the promotion of a spirit of protection toward them.

The following data will show that the principle of bird protection has become thoroughly woven into the fabric of Federal, State and municipal government. It is, of course, better to inculcate the principles of bird preservation than simply to punish an offender and leave him in a hostile frame of mind, but it is none the less important that all bird lovers should know the support furnished by the law.

The Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act makes it unlawful, at any time or in any manner, to hunt, take, kill, sell, purchase or possess any of the following birds, or any part or nest or eggs thereof:

Migratory insectivorous birds: Cuckoos, flickers and other woodpeckers; night-hawks or bull-bats and whip-poor-wills; swifts; hummingbirds; flycatchers; bobolinks, meadowlarks and orioles; grosbeaks; tanagers; martins and other swallows; waxwings, shrikes, vireos; warblers; pipits; catbirds and brown thrashers; wrens; brown creepers; nuthatches; chickadees and titmice; kinglets and gnatcatchers; robins and other thrushes; and all other perching birds which feed entirely or chiefly on insects.

Other migratory non-game birds: Auks, auklets, bitterns, fulmars, gannets, grebes, guillemots, gulls, herons, jaegers, loons, murrelets, puffins, shearwaters and terns.

EXCEPTIONS: Collecting for scientific purposes under permit of the Secretary of Agriculture.

The Penal Code of California:

The only game birds whose killing is permitted at all are: mountain, desert and valley quail; grouse, sage hen and dove; ducks, (except wood ducks), geese, brant, Wilson snipe, coot and gallinule. All other game birds are protected to the same extent as non-game birds.

The Code makes it a misdemeanor to kill, catch or possess, living or dead, any wild birds other than those specified in the preceding paragraph. It is likewise unlawful to take, destroy, or possess, the nest or eggs of any wild bird protected by the Code.

EXCEPTIONS:

1. The English sparrow, great horned owl, sharp-shinned hawk, Cooper hawk, duck hawk, butcher bird, blue jay and house finch, (linnet), are not protected by the Code.

2. In districts 1, 2, and 3, the blackbird is not protected.

3. Wild birds found destroying berries, fruit or crops, may be destroyed by the owner or tenant of the premises where the birds are caught in the act, but the birds so killed may not be shipped nor sold.

4. Any non-game bird may be kept as a pet, if a permit be first obtained from the Fish and Game Commission.

5. Birds, nests, and/or eggs, may be collected and possessed for scientific purposes, but only under permit of Fish and Game Commission.

The Code makes it a misdemeanor to hunt, kill, catch or possess, any wild bird or wild animal, in districts designated as Game Refuges.

EXCEPTIONS: Birds described in the Code as predatory, namely, blue jays, English sparrows, great horned owls, sharp-shinned, Cooper and duck hawks, and house finches, (linnets), may be destroyed or captured, but only by a person who has previously secured a special permit from the Fish and Game Commission.

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Alameda Municipal Code makes it unlawful to entrap, kill or destroy, any bird or birds except English sparrows in the City of Alameda; and it is unlawful to discharge fire-arms of any sort, or to hurl any missile by means of a sling in the city, or to discharge any spring, bow or air gun upon any public street or place in the city. Ord. 143 N. S. permits shooting on bay, by certain persons, not less than 500 yards off shore, during ducking season.

Berkeley Ordinances make it unlawful to discharge any air gun or fire-arm of any kind or to use any sling; or to kill or trap any bird or birds excepting sparrows and butcher birds, within the limits of the city.

Oakland Ordinances make it unlawful to trap, snare, or otherwise capture or kill any wild bird, except water fowl and birds of prey, within the limits of the city. It is unlawful to discharge any fire-arm within the city limits, except under certain special circumstances, one of which being the destruction of noxious animals upon land owned or occupied by the persons using the fire-arms. It is unlawful to discharge any spring, bow or air gun upon any public street or place in the city.

San Francisco Ordinances make it unlawful to discharge any fire-arms within the limits of the City and County of San Francisco, except under special permit of the Mayor or Board of Police Commissioners; or to possess or use any sling-shot within the city, or to use an air gun outside a regularly licensed shooting gallery. It is unlawful to kill or destroy any bird in or upon any public street or square.

Any bird is entitled to the protection specified for it under any provision cited above.

A. S. KIBBE.



NOVEMBER FIELD TRIP was taken on Sunday, November 14th, to Lagunitas Lake. The sky was overcast, but the weather made walking comfortable and observation easy. Birds encountered were: Eared grebe, Western and California gulls; Brandt cormorant, green-winged teal, canvas-backs and scaups; ruddy ducks, great blue heron and eoots; sandpipers on mole, kildeer, sharp-shinned and sparrow hawks and an osprey; kingfisher, California woodpecker, flicker and black phoebe; coast and California jays and crows; green-backed goldfinches, pine siskins, Nuttall and song sparrows; juncoes, fox sparrow, California and San Francisco towhees; Sierra creeper, wren-tit, bush-tit, golden and ruby-crowned kinglets; hermit thrush, robin and western bluebird. Thirty-eight species in all.

Members present were: Mesdames Kelly, Kibbe and Reygadas; Mesdemoiselles Ames, Beaman, Griffin and Pierce; Messrs. Kelly and Kibbe. As guests, Mrs. Bridges, Miss Calhoun and Mr. Bridges. Nine members and three guests.

AUDUBON ASSOCIATION OF THE PACIFIC

FOR THE STUDY AND THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS

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